against violet by brawlite

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Summary:

Bruises, in various shapes and forms.

against violet

Author's Note:

> written for a prompt of billy comparing bruises to hickeys.

It’s three o’clock in the morning and the Hargrove household is quiet.

The early hours of the morning are some of the only times Billy can restfully sleep; but they’re also the only time he can find peace, too. And damn, does Billy hate wasting that kind of gift.

The crackle of Max’s radio, jarring and annoying and infuriating, has long since ceased. The television is quiet now, free from the drone of Susan’s soap operas after she had retired for the night, clad in pajamas made for a women fifteen years younger than herself that Billy *knows* Neil doesn’t appreciate. Even Neil, exhausted from anger, has passed out at this point. If Billy were to strain hard enough, he would be able to hear the sound of Neil snoring from the couch in the living room, where the man had passed out after too many fingers of cheap whiskey. But Billy doesn’t want to hear him, so he doesn’t try, doesn't bother.

He doesn’t turn his music on either, even though part of him wants to fill the silence with his own noise. To claim something, some part of the day, as his own. During the day, he uses the violence of the music to drown out everything else, to try and work himself back into a life he knows he’s lost to everyone else. But the silence can be his too, he thinks.

In these small hours of early morning, just before the sun has come up, rosy and fiery over the bare trees, Billy can have a few moments that are just his.

It's just him and the darkness of the Hargrove household. Just Billy and the silence.

He pads around in his room, stocking feet soft against crummy

carpet. He can feel the concrete just underneath it, unforgiving and hard. Susan cleans in here, vacuums and everything, but the shit below his feet is so cheap nothing can make it feel hospitable. Nothing can get rid of the reality that this house is a cheap shithole, built prefab and barely held together with a few rusty nails. It doesn't even have a cellar. What kind of house in tornado alley doesn't have a *cellar*?

Maybe a tornado will sweep it all away one day.

All of the air leaves Billy in a sigh as he settles down in front of his mirror, eyes finding his own tired face staring straight back at him. It's a warped and distorted version of himself, cheapened by the quality of the glass and by the way it's resting, bowed on a vanity made of stacked milk-crates and a sheet of wood from the lumber yard. But the figure in the mirror is still him, always him -- even when he wishes it wasn't.

Billy's been avoiding the mirror ever since he made it back to his room tonight. He knew what he'd find – and he wasn't quite ready. He's still not ready, he thinks, as his eyes settle on the bruises on his face.

With a strange kind of reverence, Billy brushes his fingertips over his own lips, thumbing over where the bottom one's split and swollen and red. It *hurts*, but he paws at it anyway. He touches his jaw, where the bruising is green and purple, and then right under his left eye. The black eye has yet to fully come in, but Billy knows it'll be there when he wakes up -- if he ever decides to go to sleep.

He keeps his touch mostly gentle and light, and can't help the strange indulgence of pretending his hand is someone else's. Someone caring, someone who looks at him without pity, but with something deeper, like concern and warmth.

Maybe, someone like Harrington.

Billy's eyes drift down from his face in the mirror, falling to his neck. He shrugs his shirt off his shoulders, undoing the last two buttons beforehand, and admires his neck. Just under the collar of his shirt, hidden from prying eyes, there are more bruises.

Bruises left there by Harrington.

They are purple and red and dark, blooming against his pale skin in the low light of the room. Billy touches them, too.

The marks are similar to the ones on his face – but at the same time, they aren't. They're in the shape of lips, the physical memory of fervent and heated kisses. They were pressed against his skin by Harrington, who murmured secret, heated things, in between swipes of his tongue. They leave Billy's chest warm every time his eyes fall on them, every time he presses his thumb too hard against violet.

The bruises on his face are in the shape of knuckles. They are in the shape of shape of harsh words, however true the sentiment behind them may be. When Neil calls him *faggot,* the word harsh and snarled through clenched teeth, he always punctuates the statement always with violence. And Neil isn't wrong -- it's just as true as the pain he inflicts.

Billy's face hadn't been black and blue when he'd gotten home, but his neck had been. The heat of the bruises Steve had left under his shirt had kept him centered through tonight's onslaught, had kept his head above water.

Gorgeous, Harrington had called the bruises he'd left on Billy's neck. He had pressed his lips over them again later, gentle and oddly tender, as he had admired his work. It had made Billy feel warm, wanted. Oddly cherished, even if that, in itself, wasn't necessarily true. Just a twist of his gut from an afternoon of passion, a good time twisting around in Steve's sheets. An embarrassing fantasy.

Billy wishes, just for a moment, that he could get Steve to press kisses against the bruises on his face. He wishes that that Steve could wash away the hurt and the pain from his father's fists with the gentle press of his lips. He wishes that Steve would *want* to do that. Billy wishes – well, Billy wishes for a lot, these days.

Billy is lucky enough to have what he has. He's lucky to be alive.

Right?

Minutes pass. Maybe even hours. Billy's eyes are tired and his face hurts, but he can't stop touching, can't stop the careful swipe of his fingers over the blooming memories on his skin. Can't stop the not-so-careful way he digs his fingers into the bruises afterward, the way he lets the pain blossom into something sharp and aching. Something he deserves.

In the morning, Max finds him in the kitchen, cradling a cup of coffee between his hands. It's lukewarm by now, considering Billy had been up with the sun.

"You look like shit," she says.

Billy isn't sure if it's his face she's talking about, with the remnants of Neil's bruising fresh and raw just underneath the surface of his skin, or the dark circles under his eyes from yet another night of no sleep. But -- it doesn't really matter, does it? He looks like shit and he feels like shit, too.

"So do you," Billy snarls, even though she doesn't. She looks happier than she did when they first moved here. He kind of hates her for it in a way that twists under his ribs, black and venomous. Rotten with jealousy.

Billy thinks of finding Harrington at school today, of carving out sometime with each other during their shared free period by pulling Harrington into a spare closet somewhere, or dragging him under the bleachers. He thinks of Harrington's eyes on his face, concerned and sorry, but never full of pity. He thinks of finding pleasure, white hot and addictive, instead of pain.

He thinks of Harrington and strangely tries not to smile.

To some small extent, Billy is happier now, too. Even if it's not always by much at all.

Author's Note:

i'm not really sure i like this at all.

you can find me on tumblr, if you are so inclined.